

6 Caregiving Resources

In one of four New Jersey homes, an adult is providing caregiving services for an elderly or disabled family member or friend. These individuals know first-hand the importance of planning ahead to meet potential long-term care needs. They know that providing care can be both rewarding and challenging at times. Respite services and support groups can help to relieve stress and offer caregivers some time to themselves. Although it may seem secondary, it is imperative for caregivers to take care of their own needs in order to better care for their loved ones.

Caregiving often starts gradually. As needs increase over time, you may share the responsibilities with other family members or friends, or you may do it all, even providing around-the-clock care. Examples of the assistance caregivers provide can include, but are not limited to:

- Financial assistance and money management or bill paying
- Transportation to the doctor or to other appointments
- Personal care assistance with bathing, dressing and grooming
- Medication management
- Meal preparation and recognition of dietary needs
- Socialization by visiting frequently or arranging trips
- Home maintenance
- Housekeeping
- Shopping for groceries and personal items

Discussing Need for Long-Term Care

Adult children often find it difficult to discuss the possible long-term care needs of their parents with them. It may seem offensive or premature to ask what a parent's plans or wishes are should they be hospitalized or need skilled nursing care. However, it is an excellent way to prepare yourself and your parents so that appropriate decisions can be made during a difficult time in your lives. Within a family there may be anxiety, guilt or differing opinions about what kind of care is needed, who is the best provider or from where the finances will come to pay for needed care.

It is important to understand how parents might feel about discussing long-term care needs. They may experience low self-esteem or depression when reflecting on their age or poor health and may be reluctant to discuss such plans with you because they don't want to lose their independence. They may also hesitate to bring up the subject because they feel they are being burdensome.

It is important that adult children discuss long-term care planning options with their parents before a crisis occurs that requires quick decision-making. This way an aging parent's wishes for his or her care can be known and preparations for care will not be a totally new concept for either the parent or the caregiver. This is likely to contribute to a less stressful situation for everyone.

The first step in long-term care planning is to overcome the reluctance to talk about it. Professionals, such as social workers, discharge planners, or geriatric care managers are available to coordinate and direct a family meeting if this will be helpful for you and your relatives.

Evaluating Long-Term Care Needs

There are a number of people who can help evaluate the long-term care needs of an older adult or help locate resources that may provide the necessary care.

- Your parent's physician is a good person to start with because he or she can discuss medical needs and give advice on the type and length of care necessary.
- You may also seek the services of a geriatric assessment center. These groups are usually found in local hospitals or community and county health centers.
- Care managers, social workers or nurses through public programs such as NJEASE or hired privately can help assess needs and locate appropriate resources.

The physician, geriatric assessment team or care manager should evaluate the medical requirements needed by your parent such as monitoring, medication management, home health assistance or physical therapy. They can describe the possible changes in care that will be needed over time, evaluate for illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and discuss how these conditions may result in the need for special care services in the future.

Locating Services

There are several resources you may find helpful when locating appropriate services:

- Friends and relatives who have confronted similar situations
- Local services providers, such as senior centers or family service agencies, can introduce caregivers to various service or housing alternatives. These alternatives can include agencies providing different levels of care in various settings.

■ The County Office on Aging provides information and referral services and care management. It offers a directory of resources and services available in each caregiver's county. For information about Caregiver Support Groups or other resources in your community contact the Office of Aging, by calling NJEASE at 1.877.222.3737.

■ Visit the State's website established specifically to help caregivers locate vital information and services at www.caregovernj.nj.gov.

Assessing the personal needs and capabilities of your parents is often more difficult but just as important as addressing their medical needs. In addition to finding what services are needed and who is available to provide the services, a critical part of planning long-term care depends on how important it is for your parent to remain in control of his or her own life.

Some people, no matter what their age, may adamantly want to receive as little assistance from others as possible. For these individuals, who also have the ability to manage their own program of care, remaining at home with minimal assistance may be possible and very important. Others may be willing to receive outside assistance if they or their family members are primary decision-makers. In these situations in-home care, or relocation to a residential setting, may be most appropriate.

Seeking Support

Although it may often seem difficult to find time for yourself, it is important to take care of your own needs so that you do not become overwhelmed.

Caregivers of older people who are chronically ill or disabled can undoubtedly benefit from home and community-based services. Helping yourself is as important as helping your parents, and there are several resources you can use that offer temporary assistance or ongoing help for both you and your parents. For example, adult day care, senior centers, home health care services and respite care enable caregivers to work or take time off from caregiving responsibilities, knowing their loved ones are getting the care they need. In addition, you may want to check with your employer's human resource department for information about policies that offer time off for parental care. You can also ask for a copy of your rights under The Family Medical Leave Act, or contact the Wage and Hour Divisions of your regional Department of Labor. You may also wish to join a caregiver support group. Your County Office on Aging can give you information about support groups meeting in your area.

NEW JERSEY EASE

(EASY ACCESS SINGLE ENTRY) IS AN EASY WAY FOR INDIVIDUALS TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE THE SERVICES YOU NEED, PLEASE CALL 1.877.222.3737.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CAREGIVING, PLEASE CONTACT THESE RESOURCES:

**THE COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING/
STATE INFORMATION HOTLINE**

NJEASE: 1.877.222.3737

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES
DIVISION OF AGING & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

P.O. Box 807

Trenton, NJ 08625-0807

1.800.792.8820

(toll-free for NJ residents only)

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES**

222 South Warren Street

P.O. Box 700

Trenton, NJ 08625-0700

1.888.285.3036 (toll-free)

609.292.7800

609.292.1210 (TDD)

www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds

For more information or additional copies please contact New Jersey EASE (Easy Access Single Entry), toll-free at 1.877.222.3737, the State's Senior Services Helpline at 1.800.792.8820 (out of state callers: 1.877.222.3737), or visit the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services Website at www.state.nj.us/health/seniors.htm.

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